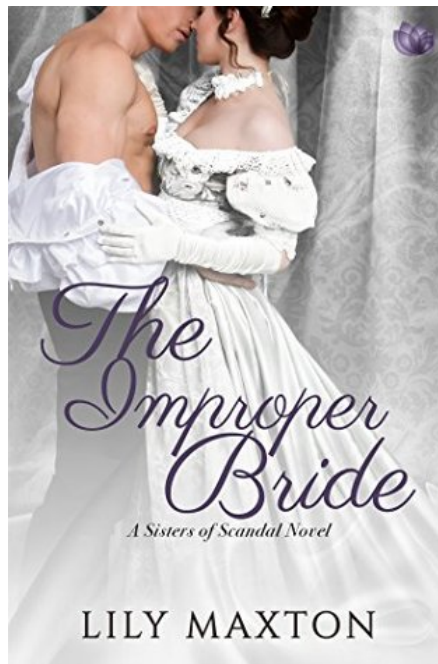




The Improper Bride

Lily Maxton

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The Improper Bride Lily Maxton

Cold, arrogant, and demanding Henry Eldridge, Marquess of Riverton, would never dally with a mere servant. But when Henry is injured in a horrible fire, his pretty housekeeper Cassandra nurses him back to health, throwing them together day and night. As he slowly heals from his burns, their friendship blossoms, and the class walls between them start to crumble. Cassandra is surprised by glimpses of a kind and thoughtful man beneath her employer's hard façade—and even more surprised when she develops tender feelings for him. But anything between lord and servant is impossible...and besides, as a widow, she knows love only leads to heartbreak.

Henry is changing, as well. His close brush with death has opened his eyes to his self-imposed emotional isolation...and has urgently reminded him of his duty to marry a well-bred lady and produce an heir. Determined to do right by his family name, he immediately begins searching for a suitable bride. But Cassandra is the only woman who is never far from his mind or his heart. Contrary to everything he's been taught to believe, he realizes his lovely housekeeper might just be his perfect match. Now, if only he could convince everyone else of that. Especially Cassandra...

The Improper Bride Details

Date : Published January 25th 2016 by Entangled: Scandalous

ISBN :

Author : Lily Maxton

Format : Kindle Edition 292 pages

Genre : Romance, Historical Romance, Historical, Regency Romance, Historical Fiction, Regency

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From Reader Review The Improper Bride for online ebook

Lynn Spencer says

4.5 stars - B+ at AAR I'm usually leery of jumping into the middle of a series, but the plot of **The Improper Bride** intrigued me. Thankfully, this book stands alone very well, and even better, it was a fun read. If you like romances that deal with class differences, this would definitely be one to try.

The book opens dramatically as Henry Eldridge, Marquess of Riverton, is disfigured and gravely injured in a fire. As we move into the main portion of the book, we learn that Henry is closeted in his rooms and his recovery appears uncertain. Henry's doctor theorizes that if he can be kept busy with a task that engages his mind, then he may very well make it back to at least some sort of normal life.

That's where Cassandra Davis, his intelligent and practical housekeeper, steps in. Though certainly a commoner, Cassandra's background differs somewhat from the average housekeeper. Her father was the village schoolteacher and so Cassandra received a little more education than many house servants, and she has a quest for still further knowledge. In her small quarters at Henry's home, Cassandra keeps a German cuckoo clock that was a family heirloom and she decides that the perfect task to keep Henry's mind engaged would be something that she dreams of doing as well - Cassandra wants to learn German.

It's an unusual therapy, but it works. Things start off awkwardly. Given that Henry is emotionally raw from his ordeal and the earnest Cassandra is all too aware of the class differences between them, this would seem inevitable. It probably doesn't help that Henry was known for his coldness and arrogance even before the fire. However, they build a rapport during their lessons and one can see a friendship starting to form as Cassandra broadens Henry's perspective at least as much as he influences her. In some hands, this could have been supremely cheesy. However, Maxton does a good job of making this feel charming rather than hackneyed. It helps that in Henry's character arc, she had him thaw quite a bit, but she didn't turn him from the frosty marquess into too cuddly of a teddy bear.

This is a partial review. You can find the complete text at All About Romance:
<http://likesbooks.com/cgi-bin/bookRev...>

Maria Rose says

Lily Maxton's historical romances have all made it onto my favourites list for their witty banter and delightful scenarios that are just a bit outside the norm of the times. In this case, it's a scarred and grumpy hero, Henry, who is recovering from his wounds due to a house fire. Truth be told, he was grumpy and cold and standoffish even before his injuries, but his disposition hasn't improved. His housekeeper of five years, Cassandra, is the only one who seems to be able to see beyond his bark to the lonely man underneath. As they start to connect on a more personal level, Henry comes to realize that she is invaluable to him, in more ways than one. Can a love affair between classes that should be doomed from the start survive?

I loved this story! Seeing Henry evolve from the lonely and bitter man he is at the start to a caring and compassionate hero was a delight, as he learns to love and be loved in return. While it's necessary that he make changes in his attitude and beliefs in order to become worthy of Cassandra, he's not the only one who has to change. Cassandra, as a widow, has closed herself off from meaningful and loving relationships. Her position as housekeeper keeps her busy and worrying about the rest of the staff is enough to fill her days, particularly when her duties start to include the care of her injured employer. I loved seeing her start to open

up to Henry (and vice versa) as they begin to share the details of what has made them who they are. The class difference is ever present, something Cassandra worries about far more than Henry does. In the end love triumphs. 4.5 stars for a delightful and heartwarming story.

Note: a copy of this story was provided by the publisher via NetGalley for review.

Mei says

I thoroughly enjoyed this story!

It's wonderful what the author can do when writing a complete and lengthy novel! I've read the first of this series without actually knowing that it was a shot (very shot!) story and appreciated it but for the length. Here we have a **complete** story where **everything** has been developed fully!

There's almost no action here - it's character driven story. And what characters both hero and heroine were! WOW!!!

Cassandra. Ah... if only all the heroines were like her!!! Romancelandia would be a much nicer place! She's an older woman, a widow. She doesn't have emotional baggage. She was not mistreated by her family nor by her husband with whom she was actually deeply in love. She's intelligent and smart. She knows what she wants and how to get it. She also knows how to treat spoiled boys - after all she has 7 siblings! :)

Henry. What a character!! It takes a brush with death for him to acknowledge that he's not invincible. It takes a disfigurement by fire to make him aware that not everything bends to him. And it takes a willful housekeeper to awake his conscience and to help him grow up. He's a bad, bad, bad boy who thinks everything is due to him; that he can take everything; that nothing is denied to him. But he's due to some really rude awakening! And he's going to LOVE it!

I loved how their story developed. How both of them face step by step the challenges of life. How they come together slowly, slowly, slowly, but at the same time inesorably.

I also loved how both of them didn't run away from their obvious problems, but faced them even when they were seemingly insurmountable. At the same time they didn't avoid them either, thinking they'll just disappear.

I loved how the whole book vibrated with passion. I could feel it in the tip of my fingers when I scrolled the pages.

Oh, please, please, if you haven't read this book, do it right now!

Elaine says

Rating 4.5/5

This is a delightful historic romance with a determined Marquess, seriously injured in a fire, finally seeing his housekeeper, Cassandra, as a person, rather than someone fulfilling a role. To prevent him succumbing to melancholy, his surgeon asks Cassandra to give him something to do as he recovers. After he agrees to teach

her to read and speak German, he finds that his near death experience has opened his eyes to life, love and attitudes - especially with the help of his feisty housekeeper!

The characters are brilliant exponents of the English class system prevalent at the time in which the story is set. The much ingrained etiquette rules would make any close relationship between the two totally scandalous and they both know that. How the author portrays their changing relationship and events is totally engaging.

This is a truly enjoyable regency romance, a delectable tale of upstairs/downstairs love that is enthralling, with great banter, changing perspectives and attitudes and an amazing tale to get lost in. It is a sweet, well written, novel that I have no hesitation in highly recommending to anyone who. like me. enjoys this genre! I'll certainly be looking out for more by this talented author in future!

Thanks to the author, publisher and NetGalley, too, for letting me read an ARC of this book in exchange for this, an honest review.

Katie(babs) says

The Improper Bride is a pretty typical historical romance that features an employer and employee romance. The hero, Henry falls for his loyal housekeeper Cassandra after he recovers from a fire that may have been set deliberately. Prior to this event, both didn't give much thought to one another. They stuck to their roles and were well aware of their status. But when Cassandra takes care of him, and while Henry is bored in his bed, he humors Cassandra when she asks him to teach her German. During these lessons, Henry sees Cassandra in a different light, and becomes attracted to her. She also sees Henry differently, and one thing leads to another, and they begin a secret affair that could have dire consequences for Cassandra, because after all she is just a housekeeper, and Henry is a lofty lord.

Since this is a historical romance, you know Henry and Cassandra will have their HEA with love and marriage and everything that entails. Cassandra is a sympathetic heroine who you feel Henry will do right by. Their romance is believable but there were some unresolved issues from the last book, which I didn't read. Henry was the villain then. He got his mistress pregnant, but let her go when she fell in love with another man. The big problem is, Henry doesn't acknowledge his child. Cassandra is aware of this situation with Henry and his former mistress, but she's not disgusted or appalled by his shrugging off his child, as if the child is a nuisance. Again, I didn't read the book before this one, and the situation could have been resolved adequately, but based on what I read here, it doesn't go into great detail. Because of Henry's past cruelty, I just didn't believe he was redeemed enough even though he appears kind to his staff, especially Cassandra. But the overall focus is on Henry and Cassandra falling in love, and the past isn't a concern.

The mystery of the fire is solved, and Henry doesn't torture himself on whether he is the right man for Cassandra, or what will happen if he marries her. All's well that ends wells for these two.

Nefise says

I liked the book very much. It is one of the best HR, I've read recently. Imo, a real kind of HR is hard to find, that's why I return to read Mary Balogh's books consistently.

What I like most about the story is that it has a solid plot and it's pacing and progressing was well done. I

don't like to when author make a human or a situation an important issue, then it never blend to story well. Whatever subjects or matters were mentioned, all of them resulted in the story. Protagonists' friendship was nice to read, especially learning German and their common interest of literature. Slowly building romance makes the story more appealing for me. It was a bonus for me and it's quite believable. And I sense Pride and Prejudice's inspiration for a scene. (view spoiler)

Why not 5 point because although I liked to read the book, I was not excited very much. Sometimes, you feel like you are living the story when reading, it was not like that. Another thing, author's writing style and prose is wonderful. I lost myself in pages immediately.

Noura says

To really appreciate the story, one should have already read the book before: The Mistake. Then you'd know the extend of the Henry/Marquess of Riverton's villainy. (But really, he's not the disgustingly heinous type). He's a typical aristo who's smart, used to getting everything he wants and people doing his bidding. So his inflated ego was badly bruised when his mistress of a short time who is also pregnant with his child dumped him for a common man (in the previous book). However, in this story, he eventually became a better person and changed his way when he realized that the one person who'd genuinely care whether he lives or die (after an accident) is his housekeeper Cassandra.

The romance is sweet and tentative - this is after all a love story between a titled man and his widowed housekeeper. Cassandra is everything that is unsuitable as a prospective Duchess - she is a commoner, under his employ and a widow. However, she is everything he needs - a woman with a sharp and practical mind, kind heart who's able to see past his flaws and see the good in him and cares for him deeply. He knows this too and is caught between having to fulfill his duty and choose a titled girl (conveniently portrayed in this story as vapid, scheming and snobby girls) or to follow his heart and choose a woman who would complement him as a person.

I love the build up of the romance. The sexytimes are just enough to keep the story hot without being gratuitous. The story-telling is kept simple without dramatics and OTT plot twists. There is no side stories of other characters distracting readers from the main focus of the story - except for Henry's meddling rebellious but smart younger sister whose role became quite integral to their romance . Although everything seems to fall into place towards the end, the story flows smoothly and wraps up nicely at the end with a little HEA.

Blackjack says

I felt a little divided on how to grade this book as I enjoyed parts of it enormously but did not care for some others. So, I guess it was a B of even B+ read for me overall. I never felt bored or inclined to set it aside though!

What really worked for me was the no-nonsense mature heroine who respects herself, knows herself well, and honors her own needs. After having lost the love of her life at a young age, widowed Cassandra seeks employment in an aristocrat's home, despite almost no experience, and works hard to become skilled at what she does. Henry, the Marquess of Riverton, appreciates Cassandra's work ethic and the efficient way his estate runs with her in charge. Having enjoyed the sexual side of her short marriage, we learn that prior to the start of the novel Cassandra had chosen a brief and uncomplicated affair with the estate gardener, and that

felt like a breath of fresh air in a historical romance. When Henry falls suddenly ill to the side effects of a house fire, Cassandra jumps in to provide the emotional stability he needs to recover, and she uses the situation also to develop her desire to learn German from a multi-lingual man. German initially seems like an odd language choice for Cassandra to want to master, but its earthiness corresponds so well to her personality and ends up serving as a perfect metaphor for her love affair with Henry. That brings me to the second aspect I really liked in this story, which is that Cassandra and Henry are almost unfailingly frank in their interactions with each other. There is an almost complete lack of duplicity, subterfuge, or even small talk, and all of their conversations reveal important parts of each to the other. I held my breath during the entire scene in the library where they drink whiskey together and reveal their deepest fears. I wondered any number of times during this novel if a personal secret would be revealed and subsequently derail their fragile relationship, but that surprisingly never happens. Each time something potentially worrisome comes out, they absorb it and confront it. There is one particular fact in Henry's dealings with a previous mistress that is quite uncomfortable and I was a little surprised that Cassandra accepts it for what it is and continues to love him, but she does, nevertheless.

Now that I've reflected on all that I liked here, I wonder if a B grade is too low. I did struggle with the first 30% of the book though and felt that Henry transformed too quickly from cold-hearted to smitten and that the early segments with Cassandra and Henry needed more development. These were, I felt, the crucial and foundational moments of the novel. Also, the big revelation about Henry's less than heroic dealings with a former mistress is a harsh indictment on him and could have been a huge part of any other romance, whereas here, it's treated as a fleeting detail that is too quickly absorbed into the romance. Henry remains a questionable hero for me. And finally, the big obstacle to Cassandra's and Henry's future ultimately feels a bit trite and is resolved quickly and in a way that I anticipated. Aristocratic men could marry women of lower classes, and many in the aristocracy would find it scandalous. Yawn.

Nevertheless, the honest dealings between the couple is a huge plus here and one that I really appreciated. I enjoyed a slightly older heroine too. I also loved Henry's high-handed sister, Margaret, and would love to read her story if there is one.

Nicola says

The Improper Bride is a little different from my usual romantic reads. Historical romances aren't a genre you'll find many of on my TBR list, simply as I've not had much luck in the past and they've never really worked out for me.

"The marquess is demanding."

"And ungrateful."

1817 and following a fire at Blakewood Hall, Henry Eldridge, Marquess of Riverton is left scarred and seriously injured. Churlish to the core, his staff are wary of him, with the exception of his housekeeper, Cassandra Davis. And it's not long before she discovers her employer is the very opposite of how people perceive.

Henry and Cassandra's blossoming romance was a pleasure to read. Their class divide poses obstacles and differing opinions but the push and pull of their relationship as employer/employee and lovers was paced

perfectly and together they were sweet, frustrating and passionate.

"You are second to no one."

Lily Maxton has completely won me over with her writing and not only did I devour this, but I've been and one-clicked the rest of this series, although this can be read as a standalone. 4.5 stars

Copy received courtesy of Entangled Publishing via NetGalley for an honest and unbiased opinion.

Bubu says

Warning: Wall of text incoming!

Buddy read with Lyuda

4.5 stars! .5 star goes to Henry for being such a dubious character!

The Improper Bride is difficult to review and even more difficult to rate. The plot is very easy to break down. Housekeeper and Lord fall in love, but that's about the only thing that is easily explained. The rest, however, has me confused and conflicted, and I can see why people would bang this book against the wall. I, however, still absolutely loved it.

Being a completely character driven novel, Ms Maxton gives her MCs lots of space to develop for which I'm grateful. Otherwise, I would have probably DNF'ed it. The main conflict between Mrs. Cassandra Davis and Henry Eldrige, Marquess of Riverton, is how two people can overcome their class differences. This conflict is at the centre of the story right from the start, unlike in other books where the h/H fall in love and have a 'whoops, we're master and servant but doesn't matter, we don't care' moment. Cassandra and Henry do care, and they care a lot, especially Henry. In the various stages of the book both characters mull over the options they have, together as well as by themselves. When they reach their HEA, we see two people who are fully knowledgeable of the repercussions which makes their HEA believable.

The writing is beautiful; the scenes between Cassandra and Henry engaging, funny in a toned down sort of way and full of chemistry. There are so many brilliant moments between them, I could quote and go on and on. The push/pull between these two is vividly put into words. Most importantly though, layer by layer their true emotions are revealed and we're slowly getting an idea what makes them tick. Three dimensional characters who find themselves in a tricky situation. In my review to *The Rogue Not Taken*, I made it clear that the one thing that's most important to me in regards to characterisation is the ability of the author to make me understand their motivations. It doesn't matter if I like a character at the start of a story. What matters is that I understand the character, that I see where she/he is coming from. Ms Maxton has done a terrific job, giving the reader enough information about her characters to give them a chance. But I'll come back to that later.

Cassandra is a **32-year-old (!)** level-headed, caring and loving widow. Thankfully, she's not been abused by her husband, nor does she come from a terrible family. She truly loved every aspect of her marriage and she loved her husband. A pleasant change from the many tortured heroines I read about these days. Once she starts falling for Henry, she needs to face the fact that she has put her dead husband on a pedestal and is unwilling to consider the possibility of falling in love again. It is an incredibly tender moment when she does acknowledge it and says goodbye to the man she's loved for so long. I adored her strength and intelligence, her guts to accept that she's a servant but that Henry is not her Master. She questions him, pokes him without

being either too obvious or too annoying. She wants to understand the man she finds more and more fascinating.

Henry Eldrige. Henry, Henry, Henry! What am I to do with you? **A fair warning here to all those who say scoundrels aren't scoundrels:** This man is truly a bastard. Arrogant, hard, cold, heartless. That's how he starts off anyway. I can already see people being disgusted by him. And guess what? I loved him. But then, and I know I'm constantly repeating myself, give me a morally ambiguous hero with dubious motives, make me understand him, and I'll happily read along with a wide grin on my face. He has a few redeemable traits. He's not intimidated by Cassandra's intelligence, and even admits to himself at one point that she's probably more intelligent than him. He loves her strength and her resolve. He's actually quite insecure with Cassandra. The class differences aside, once he acknowledges his interest for her, he's very careful not to spook her. Even when he finally sees that she's just as much sexually attracted to him as he is to her, he doesn't pounce on her. There's no 'I want her, she wants me, I'm gonna shag her despite her doubts' moment. I truly loved that about Henry.

But - and there's always a but - there's a different and quite damning side to him. Just to be clear here, there's no cheating involved, but he's done things in the past that would put him firmly and quite *easily* in the villain category, and, as Cassandra so nicely puts it, it's despicable. I must admit, when I read the scene I felt as if I had been punched in the face and oh dear, what a tosser! Obviously, due to his personality, his character development is more substantial and it's delightful to see him brought to his knees. Take that, fucker! In many ways, he reminds me of Alastair de Grey from Fool Me Twice (still love the guy!) which, I know, will raise red flags with some of my GR friends. And to those I say this: The author provides us with a solid background to Henry's story. He's a child of his time, brought up to think of himself first and foremost, a lonely almost bitter man and I'm ever so grateful to Ms Maxton that she didn't make him wallow in self-pity like King in The Rogue Not Taken every time he hurts the heroine. However cruel Henry may seem, there's always a reason behind it, very much like with Alastair de Grey and Felix from The Luckiest Lady in London. Oh my, I have been throwing links to other books left and right here. But seriously, Henry is one of the most intriguing male characters I've come across lately - well since Alastair de Grey - and kudos to Ms Maxton for creating such an unlikable hero. Not easy to pull off, but she's done it with verve.

And now to the question Lyuda and I have been wondering after reading what Henry was capable of. Has Henry redeemed himself? Is he even worth of redemption? As unlikable as Henry is, his journey is one of change. Cassandra forces him to open his eyes and see that his actions have impact on those around him, especially the servants. Through her he changes, through her he comes to appreciate things he has taken for granted, through her he sees that as much as he may be bound to Society's rules and judgements against those of lower birth, his title and station in life does not make him a better man. The despicable thing he's done? **He does say sorry for it, he does regret it.** Is it enough? Good question. It's where I'm struggling. I would have loved to see a better resolution to it, but that's the author's shortcoming, not giving Henry the space to reflect more on his past actions and make it better.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, also because this was a buddy read with Lyuda. Again, Lyuda, again, again!

Sissy's Romance Book Review says

Cassandra Davis works as a housekeeper for Henry Eldridge, Marquess of Riverton. Henry seems to his staff to be very cold feeling and they do not want to much to do with him when he turns up hurt. A hurt Henry really is from a fire that has left him to be somewhat bedridden. Cassandra has taken to looking after him and trying to help him overcome his injuries. While Henry is trying to get better he finds that he is wanting to change into a better person I would say. Henry does become to like Cassandra very much and she in turn

does too. This was a very sweet romance that I find that I liked very much. I am so glad to have this book and hope that you too will enjoy it.

Juliana Philippa says

This is my first book by Lily Maxton, but let me tell you, it will definitely *not* be my last! This was such a lovely read in every single way: all of the characters are complex and three-dimensional, the exchanges between the hero and heroine are a pure delight to read, the chemistry is unbelievable, and there are no insane murderers or random kidnappings thrown in as filler. Instead, we get a lovely, emotional, pure, delicious (!!) love story between two very interesting, intelligent, and passionate people.

Cassandra (32, yes I typed that right and you read it right) was a wonderful heroine; at first I didn't have much of a feel for her, but that got better over time. If I had *one* criticism it would be that she still remains somewhat elusive throughout the story; oddly enough, I felt like I understood Henry (35) and had a far better grasp of him than I did the heroine. Regardless though, I loved her gumption and that she wasn't ashamed of her background. Her fear of falling in love again and being hurt, as she was when she lost her first husband, is a very real one and it is well written.

Henry is a fantastic hero and easily made it onto my favorite heroes list. First, I love that we're told he's arrogant, snobbish, and ungrateful — and he actually *IS* arrogant, snobbish, and ungrateful. I know I'm a broken record, but so often we're told the hero or heroine is a certain way and we never actually see it, and especially when it's supposed to be something they transform FROM, that's vitally important! Also, given the event that kicks this all off and leaves him recovering from severe burns after almost dying, it's that much more believable that he might wake up and realize what his priorities actually should be. He's so tragic and lonely in so many ways; it was heartbreaking that even though his parents are alive (which is rare in HRs when it's a titled lord) and he has a sister, he doesn't let them know he was injured. He doesn't even have a FRIEND whom he can tell.

Oh, but Cassandra is such a balm to his soul and that's what's so terrific. She offers care and challenge and love and affection and sincerity, all these things he's always missed in his life. She doesn't defer to him because of his position, though their dynamic is realistic when they are in servant/employer mode. By this, I mean that it's clear their past interactions and those at the beginning were standard, and when she "withdraws" from him (which he gets so frustrated about, it's adorable) and puts up that serene wall again, you can see that is how it's been for the last 5 years.

And that's the thing, it was very realistic in many ways. In addition to the above, you had secondary characters who are likable, but somewhat offensive (because no one is all good or all bad), it was focused solely on their relationship and their lives (because kidnappings, murders, cases of amnesia, impersonation, etc. are actually not that common!!), they have living families that are a little f*cked up but not horrible (him) or big and loving with 8 kids (her), and finally, there's no jumping around the fact that there is a huge class difference between them. HUGE!! She's his HOUSEKEEPER. And while yes, we always love the governess or companion or whatever turned countess or duchess or whatever, so often the class difference is glazed over a bit. It's there, but not really. Here, it's addressed head-on, and in Henry as well, in the sense that he IS super snobby at the beginning and the very IDEA that he's becoming attracted to his housekeeper is something he finds absurd. At the beginning, I was actually a bit nervous about Cassandra, because we find out that she's long been interested and attracted to him, but that concern quickly disappeared, because it wasn't turned into what I feared it would be, and she takes the whole situation very seriously and also finds it somewhat preposterous — though NOT, by any means, because she thinks she's below him, but just because of how English society worked in that day and age. It was the world they lived in.

So basically, it was wonderful, and you should stop reading this review right now and go and start reading the book immediately! Seriously, it was one of those romance reads that had me grinning from ear to ear or laughing out loud or biting my lip I was so nervous; you get so wrapped up in the story. It was also one of those ones where you find yourself rereading passages, because you just want to bask in them a little longer. Maxton is a terrific writer, honestly, and WOW can she write chemistry. And terrific exchanges too; the banter between them was just fabulous. So basically: go read it NOW.

Enjoy! ;-)

An Excerpt. There were so many quote-worthy sections (hence it being on the "so quote worthy" GR bookshelf), that it would be impossible to choose from — except that I decided to not pick one of the many delicious / touching / romantic / emotional passages, so that you can savor them in full when you read the story (if you DO want to read some of them, check out my million status updates below). Instead, here is one of their earliest great exchanges:

"I want to learn German," she said obstinately.

"Why?"

"I suppose because it sounds ..."

"Guttural?" he suggested. "Ugly?"

She shook her head. "Powerful. Unbending. Guttural, perhaps, but beautiful in the way that harsh things are sometimes beautiful."

He tilted his head as he watched her, and his gaze was so intent, so unfathomable, that she looked away, overwhelmed by the attention. "Well," he drawled, sounding almost bored. "If German is what you want, German is what you shall have."

A thrill of unease went through her as she recalled the saying about being careful what you wished for. (Location 466)

And P.S. I **love** that it's German that she wants to learn! How easy would it be to use a smooth and romantic language like Italian or French? But no, Maxton went with German. Love it!!

Sisters of Scandal Series

1. **The Affair** [3.5 stars] — Elizabeth, Lady Thornhill (beautiful widowed eldest sister) and Cale Cameron (bookseller and publisher)
2. **The Wager** [4 stars] — Anne Middleton (outspoken middle sister) and Michael Grey, new Earl of Thornhill (ex-traveler, now seemingly stuffy)
3. **The Love Match** [4.5 stars] — Olivia Middleton (shy bibliophile youngest sister) and William Cross (ladies' man and secret writer/poet)
4. **The Mistake** — haven't read
5. **The Improper Bride** [5+ stars] — Cassandra Davis (widowed housekeeper) and Henry Eldridge, Marquess of Riverton (really not a nice guy)

**This is a review of an ARC provided by NetGalley and the publisher*

(Written January 31, 2016)

Lyuda says

3.5 stars

Who knew speaking German can be so romantic and thrilling?

This is second time this month when I had such a hard time with rating. I had to ponder, and ponder, and **then ponder some more with my buddy-read friend Bubulinea**. And I have to say, her wonderful well-thought out review mirrored my opinion almost exactly. Bubulinea

I only want to add couple of things.

If you're able to pass historically improbable aristocrat and his housekeeper relationship (and I'm talking about real housekeeper, not the pretend kind variety), you're for a treat (for the most part). Class differences were not slapped under the rag but provided a main conflict to the story. Forbidden attraction, love and all this jazz.

This was the most romantic book I've read in a long time. The tension, the chemistry between protagonists left me swooning. There was a point in the story where the hero is reading Goethe to the heroine who is fascinated with German language. The reading was done with such a sensuality that left me breathless. The slow-building romance was very gratifying. The characters were three-dimensional and their POVs were well presented. Add to this beautiful competent writing and you have all ingredients for a solid 5-star story.

Why is it not my rating? Well, at about 59% something from the hero's past was revealed, something relevant still as the story was unveiling (and no, it was not cheating). This "something" is probably known to the readers of the previous book in the series... Haven't read it, the revelation came as a total shock, totally out of left field. And even though, the rest of the story was beautifully written, I couldn't completely shake off the revelation. Romantic in me wanted more from the hero... Oh, Ms. Maxton, why did you do this to me?!!!! **stomping feet, swaying arms**

I'm glad I read the story and the experience was much more delightful because of buddy-read. It's for stories like this that buddy-read is made for; the stories that make you contemplate and discuss....

Lady Wesley says

With Old Latin Teacher giving this five (rarely-granted) stars, and GR friend Juliana Phillippa recommending it to "Every single person alive (who likes romances)," how could I pass up this new-to-me author?

And my assessment is: *The Improper Bride* is every bit as good as they said. Henry and Cassandra are a wonderful couple, and we get to know them very well as the story progresses. This is one of those books where not a lot happens -- except the marquess (and duke's heir) falls deeply in love with his housekeeper, and we're right there with them each step of the way. Character-driven, I believe, is the term. This cross-class romance is entirely believable, as each of them firmly believes that marriage is not an option.

Ah, but this is Romancelandia, and a happy ending is ensured.

Claudia says

I was absolutely lucky to get a copy of this book for review for "Romantic Historical Reviews" and although I thought I was not in the mood for Historicals, this grabbed me from the first second.

Normally the plot "Aristocrat falls for servant" is not one of my favorites and most of the time I try to avoid it, but I am really glad, I didn't in this case.

This was a true love story and it was perfectly done. The development between the characters and for each character on his/her own was great and the love story was just swoon-worthy.

Read my full review [here](#)

All in all, I loved it and recommend it highly to everyone who loves a good love story
